Special Article

THAT HYMN OF HATE

By **AL-MANSOOR**

Bande Mataram is a most controversial political slogan. The Hindus and the Muslims swear by it— the former out of passionate love, and the latter out of passionate hatred for it. The paradox is worth discussion.

The slogan, divested from its context, means: "Thee do we worship, Mother." In reference to the context, the slogan comprises the opening words of the hymn of invocation to the goddess, Durga, of the Hindu pantheon, who is later described as "*Tang-he Durga dasha-praharan-dharini*", etc.— thou art Durga, with ten arms, etc.

According to those who want to make *Bande Mataram* the national slogan of India, the "mother" is Mother India, and by worship is meant reverence for the land of birth. The Muslims object to it as being idolatrous in conception, and as being intrinsically anti-Muslim in the back-ground, on which light will be thrown by the facts that follow.

The Author

The Author of *Bande Mataram* is the late Mr. Bunkim Chandra Chatterjee. The hymn occurs in his Bengali novel, named *Ananda-Math*. He was one of the two first graduates of the Calcutta University established in 1856, and educated at the Hooghly Mohsen College, originally founded and maintained out of the Mohsen Wakf Fund, the biggest and earliest Educational Trust in Bengal, perhaps in India, having been created in the year 1806. All alumni of Hooghly College, originally, used to receive concessions in fee rates from the Mohsen Wakf Fund, irrespective of communities.

The author of *Ananda-Math* was thus a beneficiary of the Mohsen Trust Fund. He was a gifted scholar, but, unfortunately, he repaid his debt to the Fund with compound interest by vilifying the Muslims and Islam in most of his so-called historical novels, which are characterised by deliberate distortions of facts particularly to depict the Muslim characters, mostly historical personages—princes and princesses—in darkest colours, on the convenient plea that "novels are novels, and not historical treatises," to quote his own words. The Muslim princesses, in particular, have been sought to be stigmatised by him with most unchivalrous and untrue insinuations. Even Emperors have not been spared.

To quote one example, the picture of Emperor Aurangzeb is shown as trampled under feet by a Hindu princess in his novel, named *Rajsinha*. And the fun is that the scene is a most irrelevant one, having nothing to do with the theme of the novel. It is a most gratuitous insult to the greatest Moghal Emperor, apparently to wound the Muslim feelings. The present communal bickerings in Bengal are largely due to the venomous writings of this pioneer Bengali novelist—a gifted but extremely proud and communally-minded, narrow-visioned Brahmin.

To the Hindus, he is a sort of demi-god or a great seer *(Rishi.)* The appreciation is not merely for his literary gifts. The real reason will appear from what follows. To the Muslims, his name is anathema. His anti-Muslim writings, particularly his conception and characterisation of the Muslims in *Ananda-Math*, have made his name an accursed one with the Muslims. *Ananda-Math*, again, has made him a great sage with the Hindus, having furnished the neo-philosophy of the Hindu political movement, which is the back-ground of Hindu Swadeshism and its aftermath, the cult of *Terrorism* in Bengal. The gift of *Bande Mataram* is considered his crowning glory.

The Theme

Ananda-Math is admittedly based on the so-called Sannyasi Rebellion in Bengal during the seventies of the eighteenth century, about 25 years after the Battle of Plassey, when, in the words of the author, "Bengal had not been under British administration. The English were then Dewans of Bengal, responsible merely for revenue collections. They did not take over the task of safe-guarding the life and property of theBengalees. The task was entrusted to Mir Jaafar, the Villain, the Beast in human form, the Disgrace to Humanity—the Fellow incapable of defending himself, much less Bengal—the dozing Opium-Eater."

Mark the billingsgate against a Muslim potentate, now in the Life Beyond, though no tear need be shed for the misguided traitor who betrayed his Master in violation of the pledge taken on the Holy Quran. The mentality of the "great sage" will appear in more lurid light from his characterisation of the Sannyasi mauraders, despoiling innocent population, including women and children, and committing arson and loot, not for a kingly throne, for which Mir Jaafar proved the traitor, but for mere mercenary gain. In the eye of the "seer", these dacoits are national heroes, while Mir Jaafar is a disgrace to humanity!

The Santans

Ananda-Math is a temple inside a dense forest. It is the fort of the Sannyasis. The "goddess, Durga," the "Deity of Prowess", is installed there. She is worshipped with the hymn of *Bande Mataram*. The Sannyasis go out in batches to the neighbouring villages to kill the Muslims, who are described by the author as *nereys*, *mlecchas*, *pigs* and so forth; to burn their houses called, "pigstys" *(shuarer khoanr)*; to convert mosques into "temples of Radha Madhav" and to despoil Muslim womanhood and children. The Muslims oppose but they are easily vanquished by the *Santans* with the battle-cry of *Bande Mataram* in their lips. What a magic cry indeed! The Muslims are depicted as no match for the Santans.

There afe, of course, other scenes and discourses on *Sanatan Dharma*. There are love-scenes as well, round Shanti, wife of Jibananda. She is also an inmate of the "Temple of Pleasure." One of the Santans started teaching Shanti. Infatuated by the "budding beauty" of the disciple, Sannyasi Thakore one day "caught hold of Shanti's hands". Shanti got annoyed, and dealt a resounding slap which "made the Sannyasi Maharaj reel round unconscious, Shanti then left the Sannyasi camp."

"Coaching"

Bhowananda was a leading Santan. He renounced the world for *Santan Dharma*. The wife of one wealthy villager, named Mahendra, sought to commit suicide, to give Mahendra a chance to become a Santan, as commanded in dream, Bhowananda saved her and kept her in a neighbouring village where she used to he visited by Bhowananda off and on, for "coaching," But the "matchless beauty" of the pupil over-powered the Scond-in-Command of *Ananda-Math* who cried out in anguish: "Santan Dharma is my life, but thou art more than life. I am sold at thy feet since the day of thy rescue. I would not have accepted Santan Dharma if I had come across such beauty as yours. I have waited four years but no more..... Santan Dharma be damned, but marry me, Love."

The Second-in-Command also argued that she could lawfully marry him even during the life-time of Mahendra as "she had a second lease of life after the poisoning." But the G. O. C., Satyananda, demurred. So Bhowananda committed suicide with "with *Bande Mataram*" on his lips. A great tragedy indeed, for it was Bhowananda who routed even the British forces under Captain Thomas, not to speak of the "cowardly nereys." And these are the national heroes of *Ananda Math*. Well might India cry: Save me from my Santans!

Different Tale.

History, of course, tells a different tale. The Sannyasi maranders never gave open fight. They used to swoop down from their jungly resorts in the Himalayas, commit depredations on unarmed people and then

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